

take additional measures to secure order and enforce our immigration laws—something that I know is a priority to me and I know to our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. In fact, most of the funding increase in the Shaheen-Mikulski bill would go to border security and immigration enforcement.

The bill our colleagues have put forward contains a little more than \$10 million for Customs and Border Protection—an increase of approximately \$118 million above last year's enacted level. This funding level would support the largest operational force levels for the agency in its history—a total of more than 21,000 Border Patrol agents and nearly 24,000 enforcement officers.

But if the Department of Homeland Security remains on a continuing resolution—or worse, shuts down—we just won't be as effective as we ought to be in securing our Nation's borders. If Congress forces a shutdown of the Department—I hope we won't—frontline personnel would be asked to continue to work without pay. We met some of them just a few days ago when we were on the border. They don't look like fast boats, but they move pretty good. We went zipping up and down the Rio Grande River looking for people trying to slip across the border, looking for folks who were trying to bring contraband—drugs, illegal drugs—across the border.

There are some 40,000 Customs and Border Protection officers who are needed to keep our borders secure. If we allow the funding for the Department to lapse on February 27, we are going to expect these guys and gals to still come to work. We are not going to pay them, at least not in a timely way.

If Congress continues to keep the Department on a continuing resolution, Immigration and Customs Enforcement will see a shortfall—I am told a little over half a billion dollars—to respond to unaccompanied minors and families with children.

In addition, Customs and Border Protection won't be able to replace or upgrade border surveillance technology, including upgrades to obsolete remote and mobile video surveillance systems in the high-risk area of the Rio Grande Valley.

The drone is a pilotless aircraft. We fly aircraft similar to these all over the planet. We fly a number of them along the border of our country with Mexico in an effort to try to see, visualize, and detect people making their way to our border, maybe just to come across, maybe to flee a bad situation in their own country. Maybe it is to bring drugs or other things that are illegal into our country. We are not going to be able to replace or upgrade this kind of technology and bring it to high-risk areas along the Rio Grande Valley.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson recently said—I want to quote Secretary Johnson just briefly. He said, “Border security is not free. The men and women of [the De-

partment of Homeland Security] need a partner in Congress to fund their efforts.” He added, “Time is running out.” Those were his words. I couldn't agree with him more.

In the next week or so, I pray that those of us in Congress will come together and will do what I believe is the right thing; that is, support the passage of a clean full-year appropriations bill for the remainder of this fiscal year for the Department of Homeland Security and do it by February 27.

After we have done that, for God's sake, let's get to work on crafting thoughtful, comprehensive, bipartisan immigration reform law for our country, one that better secures our borders, one that strengthens our economy, and one that reduces our budget deficit over the next two decades by hundreds of billions of dollars. That is what we ought to do. I would pledge here today to my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, one or two Independents, and our Presiding Officer, that we will meet you in the middle and do our dead level best to make sure we meet our responsibilities.

With that, I am looking for others on the floor who may want to speak. I don't see anybody.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING STAFFERS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I would like to pay tribute to two of the hardest working staffers in the Senate: John Ashbrook and Russell Coleman.

RUSSELL COLEMAN

First, there is Russell, a dyed-in-the-wool Kentuckian. He is a huge Wildcats fan. The only words one associates with Russell more often than “affable” are these two: “persuasive” and “determined.” When Russell sets his mind to something, there is not much you can do to stop him—not that you would want to because he is one of the friendliest guys you will ever meet. More than a few times, you will see a group entering a meeting with Russell, spoiling for a fight. Then the door opens, and they are his best friends. It is quite a skill. It is nearly as impressive as this one: Russell Coleman knows just about everybody in Kentucky. His Rolodex is something to behold.

He has done a lot of great work here in the Senate. This one-time FBI agent is passionate about law-enforcement issues. This one-time intern is passionate about mentoring others, letting those around him know, no matter how junior, that their contributions do matter.

Russell is also a great fighter. That tough will has helped Russell push through adversity with grace and with grit. Faith is a big part of Russell's life too. It is something he shares with Chaplain Black every Friday in Bible study.

Russell is ready to share more of himself, too, with his family, his wife Ashley and his children, Annie and Clay. They are all making the move back to Louisville. They will have a lot more time together, and I know they and Russell couldn't be happier.

So congratulations, Russell, and thanks for your service.

JOHN ASHBROOK

Let me tell you about John Ashbrook. John has been with me since I first became Republican leader. He was a fresh-faced kid back then, a young guy from Cincinnati who wanted nothing more than to work in the White House. I am grateful he chose to work for me instead. I am grateful John was willing to transfer his allegiance across the Ohio River for the past 8 years because John Ashbrook is easy-mannered, matched with unbending will. You don't see that very often. He has been an important player on our staff not only for his professionalism but for his character too.

John is known around the Capitol as a founding member of the Senate Republican Communications Center. With John's help, it has been a real success.

The Capitol is going to be a different place without John's laughter echoing in the corridors. Every reporter knows his name. Every member of my staff knows his smile. It is pretty hard to miss.

John, muffin in hand, is usually the first guy in every morning. Many hours later, he is often the last one out. I appreciate it deeply.

I know John's wife Kate takes a somewhat different view. I can't blame her. Kate is ready for dinners without John's Blackberry at the table, and John is ready to spend more time with his three beautiful daughters—Margaret, Abigail, and Charlotte, all born during his service here. John's daughters and Kate mean everything to him, and I couldn't be happier that John will be seeing more of all of them very soon.

CELEBRATING THE 206TH ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate one of the most admired, well-known Americans and Presidents this great Nation has ever seen. Just 56 years ago, Carl Sandburg addressed a joint session of Congress and remarked about him: “Not often in the story of mankind does a man arrive on Earth who is both steel and velvet, who is as hard as rock and soft as drifting fog, who holds in his heart and mind the paradox of terrible storm and peace unspeakable and perfect.”

Those words echo today, as it marks the arrival as the 206th anniversary of